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New statistics bring Australian Capital Region into focus

The annual publication **Australian Capital Territory In Focus 1999**, released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, carries an expanded chapter on the Australian Capital Region, the focus of the Australian Capital Region Development Council's deliberations on planning and economic development issues.

The publication shows that the region had a population of just over 500,000 people with a labour force of 271,700 people in 1997-98. It includes the ACT and the following Local Government Areas (LGAs): Bega Valley, Bombala, Boorowa, Cooma Monaro, Crookwell, Eurobodalla, Goulburn, Gunning, Harden, Mulwaree, Queanbeyan, Snowy River, Tallaganda, Tumut, Yarrowlumla, Yass and Young.

The chapter on the Australian Capital Region presents an overview of the region and examines various aspects of its demographic, social and economic situation. New additions include data on Tumut (previously excluded); monthly labour force movements; information on the forestry industry; the latest details on manufacturing; and census data including a section on housing trends in the region.

There is data for each LGA on income support from the Department of Family and Community Services (DFACS), including the numbers of labour market program income support recipients, the number of age pensioners and the total number of welfare recipients. There are new taxation statistics, and a feature on the four tourism regions within the Australian Capital Region. Finally, a historical population series for Queanbeyan is now included in the summary tables.

Some of the highlights include:

- The coastal and farming areas recorded the highest welfare dependency ratios in the region and were also the areas with the highest unemployment and age pension recipients. Of people aged 15 and over, 56% in Eurobodalla and 48% in both Bega Valley and Young were dependent on income support. These areas also recorded the highest unemployment: Eurobodalla (16.8%), Bega Valley (12.1%) and Young (9.5%).
- Farming and coastal communities continue to be poorer on average with lower mean taxable incomes. The five areas with the lowest mean taxable income in 1996-97 were Harden (\$24,522), Eurobodalla (\$24,820), Crookwell (\$24,927), Boorowa (\$25,020), and Young (\$25,403). This compares to the average for the region of \$33,455.
- The unemployment rate for the region rose from 7.2% in 1996-97 to 8.0% for the year 1997-98, significantly higher than the ACT's unemployment rate of 7.5% for the same period.
- A total of 63,275 dwellings in the region were fully owned in 1996, an increase of 68% from the 1986 figure of 37,562.
- While the value of turnover in manufacturing in the region increased to almost \$1.25 billion in 1996-97, up \$310 million or 33% on the 1993-94 figures, the numbers of people

employed in manufacturing declined by 3% to 7,910 over the same period.

- In the Tumut region alone forestry is worth an estimated \$500 million dollars per year. The industry employs 1,400 people with another 192 employed with NSW State forests.

Full details are in **Australian Capital Territory in Focus 1999** (cat. no. 1307.8) available in ABS bookshops.

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